

Campbell (H. F.)

The Difficulties and the Privileges of the Medical Profession.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE MEDICAL SOCIETY

OF THE

STATE OF GEORGIA,

AT THEIR

THIRD ANNUAL MEETING, HELD AT AUGUSTA, APRIL, 1852.

BY HENRY F. CAMPBELL, M. D.,

*First Vice-President of the Medical Society of the State of Georgia,
Demonstrator of Anatomy in the Med. College of Georgia, &c.*

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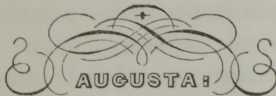
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The Journal and the Proceedings of the Medical Association.

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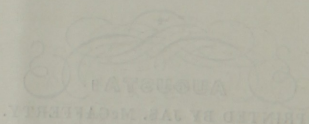
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Address.

Gentlemen of the Medical Society of the State of Georgia :

THE emotions which possess me at this moment, are of the most pleasing nature. The time, the occasion, and the character of my auditory are well calculated to fill the breast with lively pleasure and gratulation. The *time*, because this is, above all others, the period of universal prosperity in our State—the *occasion*, because we are here convened in the consummation of a duty, the most important to the Profession which we delight to serve—and above all, the character of my audience gives me courage, because here I behold those in whose persons the interests of that profession are so safely and so deservedly vested.

Were it my duty here to address a class of young and inexperienced men, I could perhaps succeed in engaging or amusing them for a while ; advice and wholesome precept, the history of our Science, or a brief exposition of its progress, would then be the appropriate theme of this hour ; but when I look around, a far different presence incites me—in the place of novices, I behold those who are far advanced in the rugged pathway of our Profession—those whose chaplets have been long worn and whose experience and teaching would well edify one of my humble attainments.

With these imposing considerations before me, it becomes a question of paramount moment, in what manner

the pledge accorded to the present hour shall be redeemed. How shall I commemorate this important period in the history of this Society? how do honor to the high objects for which this Association has been instituted?—in a word, how shall I dispose of time so valuable and important?

The occasion is an inspiring one: here, fervid fancy conjures up her hoard of pleasant and unpleasing associations, each one a theme, to tempt the mind to speculation; but this is not the time for reveries, but sober thought, and we must seek some more substantial food for contemplation; and to my mind is suggested—*The Difficulties and the Privileges of the Medical Profession.*

It is well, sometimes, amid the cares and toils of everyday life, the busy scenes which crowd out thoughts that recreate, to pause and consider calmly what we are,—what are the circumstances that surround and control us—what the influences in which we live—what are our hard and what our pleasant places: to look where are the limpid and where are the turbid waters of our Fate; to earnestly analyze the elements that are to accomplish our destiny; to see where we stand as men, and to place an honest and impartial valuation upon the part we perform in the great drama of Life.

In exercises like these we can all engage with pleasure and with profit. The old and young can here find food for the most wholesome and satisfying reflection. To the old, the retrospect of a well-spent life brings satisfaction and pensive enjoyment; they live again the scenes in which their own noble actions endure as landmarks in life's journey. Again, their hopes, their aspirations

and their dreams, recur in vivid hues on memory's unfolding canvass. Here, the fullest realization crowned some favorite scheme ; there, the cup of joyous anticipation dashed, ere its fruition with the bitterness of disappointment ; and again, the kind hand of Omniscience withholds the boon which would have been the harbinger of Ruin.

To the Young of our Profession the subject is fraught with interest : with them, the active, busy scenes of Life are ever present—actuality and verity are the elements in which they exist, and it is with this reality, gentlemen, of the Physician's life, that I now respectfully ask to engage you.

It is by no means an uncommon observation, that men can never view themselves justly and impartially—that however careful and circumspect they be in intention, however willing to make allowance and to scrutinize themselves, still the mind, full of the sophistries which ever abundant and ever dominant Self-Esteem supplies, fails in the integrity of its conclusions, and at last, there remain flaws in all the deductions on which we base our decisions. Thus, in the outset, we are warned of difficulty, but our subject is inviting and I will not refrain from its adoption.

I would not alarm you by avowing that I am about to enumerate all the difficulties and embarrassments of the Professional man ; with these, I know, you are already too familiar ; I would only advert to a few that are peculiar, and which, perhaps, have been too gravely or too lightly estimated. In my consideration of these, my object will be rather to show that they can be surmounted

by a steady and well organized co-operation, than to exaggerate their intrinsic importance ; the brighter side should present itself, and though the poison may sometimes appear, an efficient antidote will be ever its attendant.

The class of DIFFICULTIES I would present are those which, according to my conception of them, may be shown to be of less importance, really, than they are generally considered by the Profession. There are others, of a more tangible character, which require no elucidation and which are too unpleasantly associated to be appropriate to what I consider the true spirit of this occasion. Among these last, are defective primary Education—a want of refinement and an uncultivated taste—too limited a course of Study—the evil of too low a standard in our Institutions ; and, withall, the impediment of unworthy or delinquent members of the Profession. These, I repeat, are subjects too repugnant for me to approach, too hopeless and irreclaimable to be here considered—for which there is neither remedy or consolation in this age of our Profession ; therefore, why obtrude them amid the gratulations and satisfying reflections appropriate to this season.

I am aware that much has been attempted and is still in progress to remove these opprobria of the Medical Profession ; but the little advance heretofore made, proves too well that the defect is more in the spirit of the present age and the character of our present social Economy, than in any want of effort or well devised mode of remedy. Time alone, with its miraculous and

ever potent influences, will remedy evils of this nature : then let us entrust these sore defects to the unerring and improving hand of Time, for well we know its course is tending to perfection. Progress seems stamped on every human enterprise, and though such conflicting influences enter in the course, that the way is lengthened and the goal recedes, still we may be encouraged, for on comparing one epoch with another, a sure and steady improvement reveals the fullest of the great design.

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Among what are generally considered embarrassments of the Medical Profession, we find Legislative enactments occupying a prominent position ; and truly these, when carefully considered, present hindrances of the most serious and perplexing nature—hindrances founded in the, as yet, undeveloped state of the public mind, in regard to its paramount importance as a science and an art. Restrictions to a certain extent now exist, which ever since the days of Aristotle, retarded the progress of our study and narrowed our knowledge of the Human Organism, to an outline surmise through Comparative Anatomy.

It has been the misfortune of our Profession, to occupy a relation to Society, so anomalous, that to appreciate it justly, would require a greater amount of insight into many intricacies with which the subject is invested, than any non-professional body of men could be expected to attain ; consequently, laws acting apparently favorably upon society in general, have imposed the most embarrassing restrictions upon us. Laws have been enacted for the public weal, without reference to the important relations which the advancement of our Science sustains

to the welfare of the community; laws which, while we are pained by their untoward influence upon us, we can scarce refrain from smiling at, on account of their most contradictory and conflicting construction. We are threatened by legal enactments with fine and imprisonment for mal-practice, and we are at the same time warned of penalty, if we take the only possible means of accurate knowledge even in the rudiments of Science—We are the Graduates of institutions chartered by legislation, and our diplomas are necessary to the legality of our claims, while that same legislation licenses to practice and collect, many, without diplomas, without study, and without even the pretention to Science—We are constituted a Medical Board, by legislation, for the examination and licensing approved candidates, while the same legislation licenses without reference to the Board, all who apply, and that without examination or even the presence of the applicant.—(Witness the acts of our last legislature.) An act is passed to protect the Regular Profession, (we may at least claim this distinction here,) by penalties imposed on all who practice medicine illegally—the same act embodies a proviso, by which quackery in every degree of pernicious power, from the most refined infiniteissimality, to the grossest and most wholesale medication, is exempted. Indeed the whole history of legislative enactments in regard to our Profession, is replete with contradictions and inconsistencies, which, while they excite our surprise and regret, show but too plainly, that a just appreciation of our true relation to society is not yet fully attained. Here, as yet, we have received but

little encouragement or protection, and what has been afforded has been of so indiscriminating a character, as to place us on an equality with charlatans and empirics. It is only to the indefatigable energy and perseverance of its own members, that our Profession has attained its undoubtedly high position in society.

Analogous to the difficulties we experience under the influence of our relation to the decrees of State, are those accruing from our relation to society in general. In the acquisition of our knowledge, there is often presented opposition of the most active and embarrassing nature. The study of Anatomy—the very basis of medical science, without which, Physiology, Pathology, Surgery and Therapeutics are but *theories* of the most indefinite and even dangerous tendency—is often attended with the opprobrium and sometimes persecution, of the community in which we live; and yet an eminent degree of attainment in this, as well as in every other branch of knowledge, is admitted to be indispensable to the success and credit of our vocation.

Another difficulty presented by society, is the hold which charlatanry, in all its forms, has gained in every community: we have here an enemy which meets us in every grade and condition of society—the high and the low, the ignorant and the cultivated, are equally dazzled by the varying hues of this chameleon charmer, enchanted by the artfully modulated tones of this attractive syren.

Quackery accommodates itself to the wants and sufferings of all: for the ignorant and those of grosser taste, she is unmasked, and presents herself as the boastful

nostrum vender; with the more cultivated and intelligent, she assumes the garb of the most refined and transcendental Philosophy—claiming an excellence over the established systems of medicine which she bases on the most specious sophistries, we find her advancing with insidious but successful march, often into the most polished and cultivated circles. Eschewing now the coarse and vulgar artillery of the Botanic, the Charmer, and the Root Practitioner, as calculated to attract only the ignorant and the poor, she arrays herself in all the gorgeous and imposing apparel of a recondite and profound science: she affects to be deeply learned in all the doctrines of the old school—to have tested each principle and proved each precept fallacious. She has investigated, to their profoundest depths, all the occult and abstruse principles of Medical Science, and from them deduced a more excellent doctrine, and established a more efficient Therapæa. Not unmindful of Cæsar's proverb, "*Credimus Quod Credamus*," she accommodates her theories to the weaknesses and prejudices of the suffering, and cures with palatable infinitessimals, more certainly than we can, with the most nauseous and extensive medication. She so simplifies the whole formidable panoplia of Science, so thoroughly imbues the sufferer with principles to guide and expedients to answer him in every extremity, that she cannot fail to win at once upon his self-esteem and willing credulity.

When we examine carefully the doctrines of Hahnemann, and consider the transcendentalism and intricacies of his philosophy, we cannot be surprised, at the class of society from which he draws his most ardent and con-

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fiding supporters. "*Similia similibus curantur*," is a dictum given with all the confidence and indisputable solemnity of a gospel truth; and what a world of thought and philosophic reflection does it not excite! How new and beautiful the principle—how attractive the doctrine—how easy the terms of medication—how certain the recovery! It is among the cultivated and the literary, those well read in matters of general interest, that we find this form of medical fallacy prevailing. With but little correct knowledge of the true principles of medicine, which require the exclusive and unremitting study of years to master, which are too profound and too stupendous to be appreciated by the general reader, they come with that "little learning which is a dangerous thing," to compare the incomprehensible and mysterious principles of true Science with the plain and apparently consistent dogmas of Homœopathy, which, being easily mastered, they deceive themselves into the belief that they have acquired all the principles of true Medical Science: hence every patient becomes in time, his or her own physician, with as glib a nomenclature and as ready an exposition of their principles, as that possessed by Hahnemann himself.

Somewhat akin, to Homœopathy, are the various specialities in practice—as Hydropathy, Electropathy and Grahamism—each claiming for itself universal application, attended with universal success—each running its even course with Homœopathy, and each gaining its appropriate measure of credit among the afflicted and the credulous. All these at present, constitute *difficulties*, against which the *true physician* must daily and hourly

contend. But can we not still be encouraged? Do not difficulties and embarrassment of this nature sink into insignificance, when we consider the unshaken and enduring dignity of our Science?—when we contemplate her majestic Temple—"The towering pride of twice a thousand years," founded in everlasting and incontrovertible truth—her comely superstructure, builded up of all the excellencies and all the beauties of every system and every theory, that was worthy a place in so fair and so mighty a fabric.

Why should we complain if for awhile these gaudy systems flaunt in the petty show of their ephemeral glory? Shall we tremble for the fate of legitimate medicine, because she is beset by enemies like these? I assure you she has naught to fear. Rather let them tremble:

"The feeble sea-birds, blinded by the storms,
On some tall lighthouse dash their little forms,
And the rude granite scatters for their pains
Those small deposits that were meant for brains:
Yet the proud Fabric, in the morning sun,
Stands all unconscious of the mischief done—
Nay, shines all radiance o'er the scattered fleet
Of Gulls and Boobies brainless at its feet."

We know that sure destruction awaits them all—that their reign is only for a day—and that they must soon fade away, under the trying ordeal to which time will subject them. As systems, they will soon be no more known among men; but should there remain any thing of value from their wreck, the all-absorbing and eclectic spirit of true Science will appropriate and incorporate it among her truths.

Such is our relation to those false systems, that they can live distinct only in our opposition; should they possess a truth or a precept that is valuable, true Science seizes it with unsparing hand, and regardless alike of their remonstrance and their exultations, casts it at once into her vast and brilliant casket, leaving naught but worthless dross, to distinguish the ore from which she drew her gem.

Legitimate Medicine is a monopolizer, which lays its indiscriminate contribution upon truth wherever it is to be found—whether in the hands of the Botanic, the Homœopath, or the Specialist; but *woe* to that system from which she abstracts its truth—for it must as surely fail as the beacon darkens when the blaze is out.

Passing over the many personal toils and hardships of the Practitioner, let us refer briefly to the difficulty with which our relation to the body social, is invested. Experience has plainly shown, that it is important to our success, that the Physician should participate, to a certain extent, in the social enjoyments and festivities of the community in which he lives. Society exacts of him, no less than others, the contribution of his quota of that reciprocal, kindly communion which constitutes the charm and solace of social intercourse: yet, unmindful of the many trying and perplexing scenes through which he is constantly passing, he must ever bear a clear and serene brow—must ever respond with watchful and attentive eye to every word and gesture of the gossip, otherwise he is stigmatized as austere, or condemned as abstracted and neglectful.

We are not austere, but thoughtful and inattentive

we often are constrained to be. How can the eye be always ready to brighten, when it is so often dimmed by gazing on affliction and desolation? How can the cheek be always ready to glow in jovial response, when the heart is saddened by the contemplation of sorrow and bereavement? How can the ear catch every flip-pant tone, when the accents of *woe* are, perhaps, still echoing through the chambers of the soul? How can the face reflect the mirth that surrounds him, when, on the unerring tablet of a plain prognosis, is recorded the death-hour of some loved and cherished friend?

Heretofore, we have recounted a few of the *difficulties* incident to the Physician's life, which, when considered, present much to regret, and yet much from which we may hope for certain, if not speedy amelioration. Leaving these to that certain adjustment which time will ever award to merit, I offer no remedy, except for the regret which their contemplation must engender—this remedy, I think we shall find to our full satisfaction, in a consideration of the *PRIVILEGES* enjoyed by our Profession.

What, indeed, are his pains, his toils and his many embarrassments, when compared with the many exalted *privileges* the true Physician enjoys—privileges which attend him from the beginning to the end of his professional career? His studies, his attainments, and his very labors, though often attended by difficulties and dangers, are still *privileges* of the most enviable and gratifying character. The true Physician of the present day, sustains a relation to his own profession, which, when properly regarded, is one of unbounded privilege.

In most of the other pursuits of life, the acquisition of knowledge is only effected at the expense of time which should be devoted more directly to the peculiar vocation of the individual: out of a particular, and often a very restricted line, literary or scientific attainment is comparatively useless. But with the Professional man—where may he not glean to fill the vast and varied stores that he requires? What field may he not cultivate and make productive to the high and important objects of his calling? The Science of Medicine is so entirely the offspring of every branch and variety of knowledge—so dependent upon the thorough investigation and mastering of all the hidden truths and mysteries of Nature, and so tributary are all Arts and Sciences to its finished whole, that its cultivators can never feel reproach while engaged in any department of study:

“Earth hath no mineral strange,
Th’ illimitable air no hidden wings,
Water no quality in her covert springs,
And fire no power to change,
Seasons no mystery and stars no spell
Which his unbounded soul may not compei.”

Who shall fix bounds and scope to the Physician’s studies? Who can say to him, this or that branch is not legitimate for you? Our Science, having for its object man’s best worldly interest—his health and welfare—there is no object in all nature which can be said to have no relation to it—no region and no element which cannot yield practical instruction:

"We rend

The rock for secret fountains, and pursue
The path of the illimitable wind
For mysteries."

At the very vestibule to the temple of our Science, it is our privilege to study Anatomy—the science of man. Unlike the dull and distasteful preliminary detail of the Jurist or the Divine, we begin with what has been called "The noblest study of mankind." Every term which the anatomical student has to commit, instead of being a mere technicality, is associated with some recognisable and interesting object—"it is the name of some *part* which is then perhaps vibrating, contracting, and pulsating in his own frame!"

From the study of Human Anatomy, by its natural relations, we find the study of Comparative Anatomy, a legitimate as well as delightful pursuit. "And how vast and diversified a field of knowledge," says an elegant writer,* "opens out before us, as we gaze from this portal of the Temple of Science." Zoology, and through that Geology, become our legitimate studies, which, though not necessary, go yet further to refine and beautify the attainments of the thoroughly accomplished Physician. It is needless for me here to define the relation which Comparative Anatomy sustains to Geology, as it is on our knowledge of *Fossil Remains*, that we base much of the remote chronology of the Earth.

It is in all these studies, then, that we recognize *privileges* which should ever fill us with the most grateful

* Prof. Owens' Comparative Anatomy.

reflections. Is it no privilege to study nature in all her divine, though mysterious manifestations?—to unravel and interpret the many problems which are enshrouded in her daily exhibitions?—is it not a privilege, to engage with her vast and mighty truths, till the expanded mind threads all her labyrinths? Here, is studied the remote history of the Globe in her Geological strata, where time is computed by myriads of years, and by-gone ages read in “the everlasting hills,” as plainly as in the written volume.† How ennobling and how elevating are these exercises! How plainly are we shown by these stupendous works, the wisdom of God in his creation!

And, in the but recently obscure dominion of Microscopy, we cannot fail to find a world of pleasure and of privilege. Here, while truth is elucidated and mystery is solved, we have the precept plainly taught, in the corpuscle and the cellule, that God is great in the *minutest*, as in the most stupendous of his works.

In like manner, could we trace the course and intimate relations of every branch of our studies, and show that a keen *enjoyment* attends them all. We could dwell upon the admirable and immutable laws of Chemistry—the wonders of modern practice, and the still greater wonders of modern Surgery. We could congratulate ourselves upon the unbounded opportunity

† “Stratification,” says Professor Philips, “tells us the world’s remote history as plainly as Livy tells the history of the Roman republic. It tells us that at the time when the Grampians sent Streams and Detritus to the straits where now the Forth and Clide meet, the greater part of Europe was a wide ocean.”

afforded us, in the exercise of our ordinary duties, as the *benefactors* of mankind—the great privilege of doing *good*, in the Physician's high mission of CHARITY—charity, which gives and relieves, not only the common physical ills of man, but a *higher* charity, which can indulge and forgive even enmity and malice. By the constant contemplation of the lofty and sublime in Nature, as well as by his daily experience in the weaknesses and imperfections of his fellow beings, the Physician becomes indulgent of many of the errors of mankind, and accords his pity and forgiveness, often where enmity and resentment would have been excited in another.

I claim it a *privilege* to belong to a Profession whose daily *business* is the exercise of a high order of Benevolence—a benevolence which is *unbounded* and *universal* in its ministrations—which knows no distinction among the suffering—serving alike the prince and the serf, the saint and the abandoned reprobate.

The intimate relations of friend and confidant, the Physician enjoys in a most eminent degree; the importance of his calling, places him in a position of great responsibility to *many families*. At no time is mankind more dependent, more accessible, and more susceptible to gratitude and friendship, than when the portentous clouds of sorrow and gloom hang like a canopy over our worldly hope, we would avert the threatened blow and turn to every one who can afford even *sympathy*, with anxious solicitude. It is under these circumstances, often, that the Physician has his first introduction to those whom he is to serve, perhaps, for life—a warm attachment and a sympathy are at once established—

"Ties around the *heart* are spun,
Which cannot, will not be undone."

He has entered the sanctum of their domestic affliction; he has seen and sympathised in their grief; a mutual sorrow melts his heart with theirs; and henceforth a mutual *tender* reminiscence must ever bind them together in friendly trust and confidence.

And, lastly, we may contemplate with much pleasure the great privilege which we enjoy as Physicians, in living in the present age of our Profession—An age in which Science may be said to have reached her culminating point of energy and enthusiasm—when every department is in a turmoil of research and discovery—when every day adds new and rich stores to the vast magazines of our knowledge—and when learned Conventions and Associations are organized in every part of our great country, to *systematize*, to *improve*, and to *perfect* all branches of our Profession.

These, then, gentlemen, are our PRIVILEGES; these are the subjects on which I congratulate you to-day. Let us remember the DIFFICULTIES of our Profession, only to devise some efficient means for their removal. Let co-operation and "the one progressive principle of reform," be the soul—the ruling spirit of our deliberations—Let us feel that it is with us to give character and tone to the Profession in our State—Let each of our sessions be marked by some *benefit* achieved to its present condition:—Then, truly, shall all *difficulties* be removed—all embarrassments shall cease—only *Privilege* and heartfelt satisfaction shall be our constant and abiding possession.

